



# FACT SHEET

## Cut Out Domestic Violence

### What You Should Know About Domestic Violence

#### UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS

The first step you can take to help your client is to learn more about domestic violence. Society's lack of understanding about domestic violence often is the greatest obstacle a victim of domestic violence faces in her or his efforts to end the violence. With this in mind, here is some information to help you more fully understand the dynamics of this crime:

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISN'T JUST A FAMILY MATTER.

Domestic violence is never just a family problem. It is a crime that could be deadly for your client. Domestic violence affects your client, your client's children, and the entire community.

#### WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?


Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior and a method of control. It is a means of establishing a hierarchy of power within an intimate relationship, in which one partner dominates the other through use of physical violence and/or psychological abuse. Domestic or family violence includes five primary categories of abusive behaviors: physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual assault, economic control and neglect.

Domestic violence is also called battery, family violence, wife beating, intimate partner violence, spouse abuse and woman abuse.

- ❑ Batterers who are violent also use nonviolent tactics of control. Even those batterers who do not use violence regularly remind their battered partners that failure to meet their demands and rules may lead to violent assaults.
- ❑ Incidents of violence may be frequent or infrequent, prolonged or brief, severe or mild.
- ❑ Many victims suffer all forms of abuse. Emotional and psychological abuse may be more subtle than physical harm, but this does not mean that it is less destructive. Many victims of domestic violence report that this abuse is more difficult to experience. Physical injuries may heal; however, the emotional scars of domestic violence can last a lifetime.

*Cut Out Domestic Violence*

For more information, visit [www.vaag.com](http://www.vaag.com) or call the  
Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline – 1.800.838.8238 (v/tty)

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- ❑ Unless there is intervention where the batterer is held accountable for his or her actions, domestic violence usually increases in frequency and severity over time. As the batterer's violence progresses, he or she may begin to abuse the children and may direct violence or threats of violence against friends, helpers or extended family.

## **MOST VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE WOMEN.**

Most victims of domestic violence are women, but men are victims too. The following is a list of behaviors that might indicate that a woman is being abused:

- ❑ fear of intimate partner's temper or jealousy
- ❑ lack of access to money, car, friends or family
- ❑ repeated mental health and stress-related issues, such as depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse, headaches and ulcers
- ❑ repeated injuries that do not seem accidental

## **ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM.**

Domestic violence occurs between people of all ages, races and religions. It occurs regardless of sexual orientation, mental or physical ability or geographical region. It happens to people of all educational and income levels. It happens in dating relationships, new marriages and in long-term intimate partnerships. It happens in rural communities as often as in cities or suburbs. A victim may be your neighbor, or a member of your family.

## **ANYONE CAN BE A BATTERER.**

Most batterers are men, but women can be batterers too (but not in the same relationship. See *Domestic Violence is not "mutual battering"* on the next page). Batterers are our neighbors, service providers and respected members of the community. Many abusers are not violent in other relationships. They can be charming and lovable in a social situation, yet display extreme violence in the privacy of the home.

## **BATTERING IS A LEARNED BEHAVIOR, NOT A MENTAL ILLNESS.**

The abuser's experience as a child, or the messages he gets from society in general may tell him that violence is an effective way to achieve power and control over his partner's behavior. People who batter must be held accountable for their actions. Viewing them as "sick" wrongly excuses them from taking responsibility for their behavior.

## **STRESS DOES NOT CAUSE VIOLENCE.**

Battering is not caused by the loss of a job, the death of a parent or any other stressful event.



## **ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE DOES NOT CAUSE VIOLENCE.**

Abusers use violence whether drunk or sober. Many abusers don't drink or use drugs at all. Using drugs and alcohol as an excuse relieves the abuser of responsibility for his actions. An alcoholic or drug addicted abuser must be treated for two separate problems – violence, as well as drug and alcohol abuse. An abuser may not stop abusing if he becomes sober.

## **BATTERING DOES NOT REPRESENT A LOSS OF CONTROL, BUT RATHER A WAY OF ACHIEVING IT.**

People who batter typically make excuses for their violence, claiming a loss of control due to alcohol/drug use or extreme stress. A batterer is selective about who he hurts; he is not usually choosing to assault his boss, a neighbor or the mail carrier. Batterers target their intimate partners and children. In fact, some batterers, even those who drink alcohol until they are intoxicated, are in control enough to be selective about where they hit their partners so that the injuries will not show.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT “MUTUAL BATTERING.”**

Many times in homes where there is domestic violence, victims will fight back against their abusers in an attempt to defend themselves. This does not mean that the violence is “mutual.” We must consider the dynamic of power and control in the relationship. Does one partner live in constant fear of another? Is one partner afraid to speak, to go to work or tell anyone about the violence?

## **A VICTIM MAY LOVE HER ABUSER, BUT SHE DOES NOT LOVE BEING ABUSED BY HIM.**

Despite the faults a victim may have, no one deserves to be abused. Having personality flaws does not ever justify abusive behaviors.

Attitudes such as those listed below are all excuses that allow the violence to continue:

- ❑ “She should just keep her mouth shut – she knows what provokes his anger, so she should just stop.”
- ❑ “She’s not a very good wife. If she would take care of her responsibilities in the family, he wouldn’t have to discipline her.”
- ❑ “She exaggerates what he does to her. He’s a nice guy and she’s just trying to hurt him.”

Whatever problems exist in a relationship, the use of violence to resolve them is never justified or acceptable. If your client is the victim of battering, she or he is not to blame nor does she or he ever deserve such treatment.



## **ANY ACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS SERIOUS.**

Domestic violence can involve threats, pushing, punching, slapping, strangling, choking, sexual assault, assault with weapons and murder. It is rarely a one-time occurrence and usually increases in frequency and severity over time. Any act of domestic violence is something to take seriously.

## **ABUSE ALSO OCCURS WHEN PEOPLE ARE DATING.**

Many young women in high school report abuse in their relationships. Teenagers who are abusive use various tactics of control against their partners. Physical abuse in relationships rarely starts out as severe violence. Some behaviors which show the possibility that a dating partner may eventually become physically violent include extreme jealousy, blaming others for all problems, never being able to admit to wrongdoing, cruelty to animals, and holding rigid beliefs about sex-roles for men and women.

Let your teenage clients know that:

- ❑ No one has the right to hurt them as a way to control them.
- ❑ It's against the law for someone to hit them.
- ❑ If they get assaulted, they can call the police.
- ❑ If they are being abused, they can call their local Domestic Violence Program. All services are free and confidential.

Ask them to consider these questions:

- ❑ Does your boyfriend/girlfriend strike out at you or make you feel afraid or uncomfortable?
- ❑ Do you change your behavior to try to keep him or her happy?
- ❑ Are you afraid you will get hurt if you try to end the relationship?

This material was adapted from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence publication entitled *Helping Battered Women and Their Children in Rural Communities: A Guide for Cosmetologists*.